

# BUDGET

New Century. **Bold Plans.**

# 2000

## FIRST QUARTER ACTIVITY REPORT

2000-01

# Updating Albertans

Four times a year the Government of Alberta produces fiscal updates on how much it is earning, spending and investing on behalf of Albertans. It's one way the provincial government fulfills its promise to be accountable to Albertans. But there's more to accountability than numbers, economic indicators and financial tables.

These Quarterly Activity Reports are designed to give Albertans details on where the money goes. Each is a list of some of the most important and interesting achievements and initiatives begun or accomplished by this government during each quarter of the 2000-01 fiscal year. The First Quarter Activity Report covers April, May and June of 2000.

The public employees of the Alberta Government are responsible for getting many of these initiatives off the ground and maintaining them with a standard of excellence second to none. The number of accomplishments may be significant, but it's the quality and variety that this government is most proud of.

## LISTENING TO ALBERTANS

---

The Alberta Government is committed to listening to Albertans. And the provincial government has a proven track record of acting on Albertans' priorities. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, this government heard from Albertans on:

---

- A new tax calculator was created on the Alberta Treasury website at [www.treas.gov.ab.ca](http://www.treas.gov.ab.ca) that allows Albertans to estimate how much they will pay and save under the new single rate tax
- 2,500 Albertans participated in *Ag Summit 2000* (which ended in June and a report will be released in the fall)
- 41 consultation meetings have been held with Alberta farmers to examine all-risk crop insurance programs (the deadline for completion of the Crop Insurance Review is October 31, 2000)
- Stakeholders attended technical briefings on the *Market Basket Measure of low income* (the core measure for goal 2 in the Government Business Plan)
- The *Alberta Workers' Compensation Board Appeals System Review Committee* released a survey and discussion guide as part of a call for public input
- The *MLA WCB Service Review Input Committee* completed its public consultation and will be reporting on its review of the WCB service levels in the fall
- Consultation with the liquor industry resulted in policy changes to reflect the current business environment
- A public consultation on the future of Alberta's family court system launched June 21 to look at whether options such as a unified family court can improve access to the courts
- Consultations with the gaming industry, municipalities, first nations and charitable organizations as part of the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission's on-going Gaming Licensing Review
- Government Services call centre provided more than 57,000 Albertans with advice and information on registry and consumer issues
- The *Task Force on Children At Risk* (established by Premier Klein after the tragic events in Taber) released a report entitled *Start Young Start Now!*
- Responded to over 22,000 information requests from seniors through the Alberta Seniors Information Line
- The *Alberta Services Export Study*, which surveyed 100 Alberta firms, identified barriers faced by Alberta businesses exporting their services abroad. It will help establish export support initiatives aimed at improving international competitiveness



## STRENGTHENING THE ALBERTA ECONOMY

---

Albertans benefit from having a strong, healthy economy. This year the government estimates that Alberta's economy will grow by 5.5 per cent and that nearly 50,000 new jobs will be created. Actions this government took in the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter to strengthen our economy include:

---

- Alberta introduced an amendment to the single rate tax, reducing the rate of income tax from 11 per cent to 10.5 per cent and increasing the basic personal and spousal exemptions from \$11,620 to \$12,900 (an increase of 78 per cent and 110 per cent respectively from \$7,131 and \$6,055 to \$12,900)
- With the amendment, the new tax plan will create 30,000 jobs within five years and increase GDP growth by nearly \$2 billion, or 1.5 per cent
- Because of a record debt payment and increase in financial assets of \$2.7 billion for the fiscal year 1999-2000, Alberta started 2000-2001 owing \$12 billion, making us the only province in Canada without a net debt
- Discussions began with the federal government on a new *Bilateral Agreement on Youth Employment* to improve the co-ordination of youth employment programs in Alberta
- *Youth Connections* offices opened in Slave Lake/High Prairie, Fort McMurray, High River, Drumheller, Hanna and Rocky Mountain House (Last year, *Youth Connections* helped 18,000 young people aged 16 to 24 improve their employment prospects)
- Mediation and facilitation assistance offered to employees and unions contributed to Alberta's second lowest rate of days lost to work stoppages
- A Natural Resource Initiative pilot project was established to facilitate training opportunities that lead directly to resource industry employment and business opportunities
- Alberta re-introduced itself to the European Market after an absence of 10 years through a trade and investment mission to Germany, the United Kingdom and France
- Alberta's economic track record and positive business climate were identified as key factors in creating stronger ties between the province and the United Kingdom
- Alberta hosted energy leaders at the World Petroleum Congress in Calgary, June 12-15
- In co-operation with its tourism industry partners, Alberta Economic Development opened the new Hinton Visitor Information Centre

## PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

---

Albertans have said that the health system is very important to them, but it needs to be improved. That's why earlier this year, Premier Klein outlined this government's 6-point plan for health care to improve access to quality services, promote wellness and prevention, foster new ideas and protect our publicly funded health system. During the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, the Alberta government made progress in all these areas:

---

- Announced additional \$547.6 million over two years to increase access to services and address waiting lists in Calgary and Edmonton
- Developing contingency plans to respond to a potential pandemic of influenza
- Announced additional \$64 million to health authorities to replace aging medical equipment and invest in new technology
- Over 500 new training spaces at Alberta post-secondary institutions for physicians, licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, personal support aides, radiological technicians and rehabilitation practitioners
- Introduced the *Health Care Protection Act* to protect the public health care system
- Announced additional \$54 million to health authorities to reduce wait times for open heart surgeries, joint replacements, other elective surgeries, MRIs and cancer treatment
- Announced an additional \$20 million to expand long term care and home care in Alberta and to support a new strategic plan for healthy aging in the province
- \$1.35 million to the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research to bolster current injury prevention activities
- Jointly released with Canada's premiers, a report entitled *Understanding Canada's Health Care Costs*, showing the gap between the increasing provincial funding for the health system and relative decline of the federal share
- Completed the final report under the government-wide study on the aging population entitled *Alberta for all ages: Directions for the Future*

## SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

---

A quality education provides solid starting blocks for life. But this government doesn't believe education ends at a certain age. This government believes in lifelong learning. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, the provincial government supported initiatives that ensure Albertans will continue to be leaders in the new century:

---

- \$635 million in new funding over two years to maintain and expand existing schools, build new schools, encourage innovative ways to make schools more effective and economical, and bring schools up to current technological standards
- An enhanced scholarship program for students and two new book awards for Alberta authors are established to commemorate the legacy of the late Dr. Grant MacEwan
- A team of parents, teachers, students, business and labour representatives was brought together to gather input from Albertans on developing a stronger system for basic learning
- 21 teachers were named provincial recipients of the 2000 Excellence in Teaching Awards
- More than 7,500 children attending year-round schools will benefit from half a million dollars in funding to cover year-round busing costs
- An addition of over 1,300 more apprenticeship spaces (plus enhanced career options for heavy equipment apprenticeship training at post-secondary institutions)
- \$12 million over the next six years in a partnership with Edmonton Public Schools for a new Aboriginal high school pilot project
- 35 of Alberta's top graduate students awarded \$580,000 in scholarships recognizing their achievements in fields ranging from economics and law to computing science, public health and the arts
- Nine post-secondary institutions will receive grants totaling more than \$1 million for the redevelopment of courses for distance and multimedia delivery
- New Catholic Francophone and Public Francophone School Authorities created
- Six grade 11 students awarded Alberta Heritage Fund scholarships to study at one of the 10 prestigious United World Colleges
- Alberta's 13 and 16-year-old students continue to out-perform students across Canada on 1999 nation-wide science assessment



## SUPPORTING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

---

Many people have come to Alberta to make a better life for their children and themselves. Alberta has grown by the size of a small city every year since 1995. That's a total of about 153,000 people that have moved to our province. The Alberta Government funds many programs and initiatives that support children and families, such as:

---

- Born Free program (to prevent Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) broadened to include 58 Boston Pizza restaurants in Alberta that will offer free non-alcoholic beverages to pregnant customers
- Rave community dialogue sessions held in Calgary and Edmonton, a rave website launched, educational brochures on raves created, and a ministry representative designated to work with municipalities investigating rave regulations
- 13 young people from across Alberta were chosen to sit on a youth advisory panel to advise the Children's Services Ministry on issues facing today's youth
- Working group meetings held in all 18 provincial Child and Family Services Authorities who are responsible for managing and delivering frontline services and support to children and families
- Alberta opened the first court in Canada to hear exclusively domestic violence cases in Calgary. (A four-year pilot project, the court leads the way in tackling family violence quickly)
- *Family Law Statutes Amendment Act* came into effect in April and identifies the remedies and sanctions for breaking child access orders, and improves access to the judicial system for people seeking enforcement of child access orders
- Families on social assistance will be eligible for an increased school expense allowance to cover school supplies for their children in the coming school year
- Alberta families continue to have the lowest overall tax burden in Canada
- When the new tax plan is fully implemented in 2001, Albertans' annual tax savings will increase by another \$920 million to \$1.3 billion

## BUILDING STRONGER, SAFER COMMUNITIES

---

Alberta's communities are strong, vibrant and diverse. Albertans want to keep it that way. So, government is always looking for new ideas and initiatives that build on this province's already strong foundation. During 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, these initiatives included:

---

- The Alberta Emergency Preparedness Partnership was established to ensure that Alberta is ready when disaster strikes. The partnership includes essential service providers from all levels of government, business and industry, emergency services organizations, community service agencies, and the academic community
- \$12.2 million has been provided for regional agriculture initiatives
- \$10.7 million in grants approved through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to more than 500 individual artists and arts organizations in 71 Alberta communities
- 100 applications totaling \$213,550 for regional sport and recreation projects approved through the *Development Initiatives Program*
- 24 summer youth workers in 12 different Aboriginal communities participated in the Alberta's Future Leaders Program
- Hosted 1,400 delegates at the 12th Annual Vitalize Provincial Volunteer Conference in Calgary, June 1-2 (the conference included 70 workshop sessions and was identified by 77 per cent of attendees as their only development opportunity each year)
- Six outstanding Albertans received an Excellence in Volunteerism Award at the Vitalize 2000 Conference
- Province-wide advertising campaign launched to address the consequences of drinking and driving
- Grants of up to \$10,000 were given to non-profit organizations, associations and groups, community-based coalitions and networks to support crime prevention at the community level
- \$3 million was provided again this fiscal year to support Alberta's police services operations against organized crime
- \$1.2 million was provided for the training of fire and disaster services personnel in small and medium-sized municipalities to enhance public safety in Alberta communities
- Assistance to Alberta's aboriginal community to develop aboriginal tourism products and attractions (resulting in economic benefits to the community)



## PROTECTING ALBERTA'S NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

---

Albertans take pride in their beautiful, clean province and uniquely western heritage.

Albertans want to preserve the environment as well as the province's pioneering past. To ensure that natural places and special memories are preserved for generations to come, the Alberta Government performed the following activities during April, May and June of this year:

---

- Over 31,000 additional hectares of Alberta's natural regions preserved under the Special Places program
- Announced \$4.7 million over the next two years for enhanced conservation programs for species at risk
- \$17.2 million to support infrastructure rehabilitation in southern Alberta's 13 irrigation districts
- \$633,800 in grants were approved through the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation for community-based heritage preservation and presentation initiatives
- Spray Valley Provincial Park proposed in Kananaskis Country in southern Alberta
- Tourism principles were presented with respect to Alberta's national parks based on balancing ecological integrity with human use and enjoyment, and were unanimously endorsed by Canada's provincial and territorial ministers responsible for tourism

## IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND INNOVATION

---

Alberta has many cutting-edge practices to thank for the sound economic position the province currently enjoys. Many of these practices were pioneered by Alberta business and industry. Others are the result of your government at work. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of the 2000-01 fiscal year, that work included:

---

- Consolidation of research programs created a new \$30 million innovation and science investment fund
- One-time funding commitments:
  - \$7.4 million to support and promote innovation in Alberta's food and agriculture sectors
  - \$150,000 to Youth Justice Committees
  - \$1 million towards the development of a Municipal Infrastructure Management System
- \$17.3 million in joint federal and provincial support under the Western Economic Partnership Agreement to 19 projects in technology and innovation infrastructure, and community development
- The Alberta Research Council Inc. and PRECARN Associates Inc. signed a new research agreement that will benefit small and medium Alberta companies active in the development of the intelligent systems technologies
- Alberta's oil and gas expertise was showcased at the annual Offshore Technology Conference in Houston (The event attracted more than 45,000 international and Canadian industry representatives)
- iCORE launched a new grant program aimed specifically at supporting outstanding Alberta researchers currently working in information and communication technology
- Several new websites were launched:
  - Alberta Government Services at [www.gov.ab.ca/gs](http://www.gov.ab.ca/gs)
  - Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations at [www.iir.gov.ab.ca](http://www.iir.gov.ab.ca)
  - The Alberta Inventors' Information Index or AI3 at [ctn.nrc.ca/ctn/ai3](http://ctn.nrc.ca/ctn/ai3)
  - Alberta Justice at [www.gov.ab.ca/just/](http://www.gov.ab.ca/just/)
  - Alberta Treasury at [www.treas.gov.ab.ca](http://www.treas.gov.ab.ca)
- Answered and provided operator-assistance to more than 360,000 callers using the government's 310-0000 number, a toll-free, province-wide service that connects Albertans with Alberta Government offices
- The costs of recycling liquor containers are now the responsibility of manufacturers, retailers, and consumers, the same as for other beverages (a savings for Alberta taxpayers of approximately \$3.3 million annually)
- Deregulation of Alberta's electricity industry is proceeding with the auction of the Power Purchase Arrangements. Seven bidders submitted deposits totaling about \$230 million
- New rules put in place to ensure consumer protection and fair business practices in a deregulated electricity marketplace







3 3286 52314756 5

[www.treas.gov.ab.ca](http://www.treas.gov.ab.ca)

PRODUCED BY

**Treasury**  
ALBERTA



Printed on Recycled Paper